

Defending Our Faith

Happy Sabbath to all.

This week, we are continuing our series that examines the Faith of Yahshua from a somewhat renewed perspective. Two weeks ago, we looked at Defining Our Faith. Last week, Developing Our Faith. This week we are examining Defending Our Faith, and I expect at least one more part: Declaring Our Faith.

Running through these various studies is a common theme, which is that the Faith of Yahshua, at its very core, consists of two elements. The first is truth, for we must have a clear idea of how things are as Yah declares them to be, or else all our potential sincerity, all our efforts, will be focused on error. This does not lead to everlasting life. The second is conviction, for knowledge of the truth in theory, knowledge of the truth mentally, is not saving knowledge. We must be compelled by conscience, and by principle, to act according to the truth as it is in Yahshua, or else all that we know as fact will come to nothing.

In fact, we are worse off for knowing and not doing than those who do without proper knowledge. Consider these verses:

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Yahshua the Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, ‘The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.’” (2 Peter 2:20)

And here is another: “But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.” (Luke 12:48a)

Yah does honor character, and character is built through obedience to conscience and acts of faith. If that faith is in error, the result is an imperfect person, one that is not according to the perfection that is the fullness of Yahshua. Nevertheless, Yah may bring a sincere individual into circumstances by which the truth may be revealed... but what of those who already know the truth, and deny their convictions?

As it is written of them, “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” (Heb 6:4)

Those who love sin, when faced with passages such as this, are quick to ask, “What about David? What about Samson? Even Abraham had his time of sin. Surely, this passage cannot mean what it appears to mean on the surface.”

This passage is not saying that repentance from sin is impossible altogether; but sin committed with full knowledge of its effect cannot be cleansed by any new knowledge. The angels that fell, having beheld the very glory of the Almighty for themselves, can never be restored. It is not that Yah is unwilling to forgive; forgiveness was given to all through the sacrifice of Yahshua, and the Scriptures specifically say “all” not just “all men.” (John 12:32, in which “men” was added by translators) Paul speaks about “the

whole creation” groaning until the redemption shall be completed. (Rom 8:22) But creatures with knowledge of Yah, and with the freedom to choose, are given the real and eternal decision: Who shall be your master? Shall it be sin and self, or shall it be Yah and His Law of Love?

The world has made a virtue of serving the self. It is considered wise, mature, progressive, to cast off authorities, particularly spiritual and moral authorities, and to determine one’s own purpose, one’s own path, in the world. Of course, the Bible student knows, “the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” (Jer 10:23) But how do we defend a faith that teaches this, when the world sees things so very differently?

How do we even evangelize the religious world, that misunderstands our Father so badly that they make Him (on one hand) so “merciful” that He overlooks even un-confessed sins to the detriment of the sinner, and (on the other hand) so “just” that He casts the unrepentant into everlasting, torturous destruction from which they will never be released? Why can they not see the contradiction? Why must energies be spent in defending this false god whose concepts of forgiveness and punishment are so alien to our own?

The truth sets men free, if they will accept it. Yah forgives all who asks it of Him; indeed, He has forgiven every fallen creature already. But, if they will not receive it, if they make themselves unable to receive it, as the demons have done, then this forgiveness cannot lead to redemption, to restoration.

In order to reach out to mankind with the true faith, we must be “of” the faith. Again, this does not mean merely acknowledging a fact as truth. It means we must define our faith, and develop it to the point where we act according to it at all times.

Now, we have said, “People always act according to their true faith.” This is the case; the problem is that not everyone knows what his or her faith IS. That faith is revealed through our actions, and our reactions, particularly when matters of religion are concerned. The man who believes he trusts in God, and yet runs to mortal authorities when he believes himself to be in danger, his name is written among the unbelievers in the records of Heaven, his claim and verbal testimony notwithstanding. Thus, developing our faith, as we discussed last week, really means identifying what our beliefs are, and ensuring that they correspond with the testimony that we are taught to bear by Yahshua. Developing our faith is really learning about ourselves, as we are in Yahshua, and seeing through examination where gaps, errors, and misunderstandings exist. The cleansing of these, through practical trials, through the testimony of the brethren, through the tools that the Body has been given (e.g., New Moons), is the way that we are sanctified unto perfection.

So then, people always act according to their faith, and the 144,000 are the people who know with certainty what their faith is. This is why there is no guile in them. This is why there is no legalism or hypocrisy, because they are fully aware of their actual beliefs, and act deliberately according to those beliefs, truth and conviction in perfect, active, harmony.

Having defined our faith, having developed it, the Scriptures now call for us to defend it before the world. We read: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3)

Again we read, “But sanctify Yahweh the Almighty in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1 Pet 3:15)

For many, perhaps almost everyone, the idea of “defending” one’s faith involves entering into debates, and winning arguments. In some situations, discussions over doctrine cannot be avoided. It is rare that the “loser” of such a debate actually converts to the position of the “winner,” but onlookers who are undecided may be influenced in a positive way.

Often, though, it is better not to enter into controversies over interpretations and wording. In such cases, where one is being pressed to dispute, the means by which the faith is defended is through its revelation. When Yahshua had surrendered His body to the powers of this world, He was asked by Pilate to answer for the accusations brought against Him. “When He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto Him, ‘Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?’ And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.” (Mat 27:12-14)

In that moment, Yahshua was defending His faith as vigorously as when He disputed with the rulers in the marketplace, calling them vipers, hypocrites, and whitewashed tombs. (Mat 23:27, 33)

Before that hostile crowd, the Savior knew that anything He said would be used to further the chief priests’ desires, therefore He remained silent. As Philip pointed out, in doing so He fulfilled the Scripture, which read, “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” (Isa 53:7, Acts 8:32-35)

Similarly, how do we teach people about victory over sin? This is one of our primary duties as messengers of Heaven, as teachers of the Gospel. Is it a skill that may be practiced, until it is perfect? Is it a talent that may be improved? How we teach it goes a long way toward holding a mirror up to ourselves, that we may see what our own faith is. Remember, the 144,000 are able to follow the Lamb only because they know what their beliefs are; and so every act that they do is in purposeful agreement with their beliefs.

Victory over sin, the “heart” of the faith that we must defend, is not something that we have learned to do. It is not something we can teach, as if we could teach it like fixing a car: step by step. Nevertheless, we DO teach victory over sin, and we talk about it whenever we can. Why is this?

This is actually an idea that came out of a conversation that I had with Victoria last week following the previous study. I don’t remember exactly what the original question was, but I was explaining something when it occurred to me that this is something worth addressing: Why, if victory over sin cannot be learned, practiced, or improved, do we “teach” it as doctrine? Why do we not just say, “Read the Bible, and do everything it says?”

It is because, in order to defend our faith, we need to be able to see our beliefs, and to see ourselves, clearly. Paul tells us to examine ourselves. The New Moon teaches us to examine ourselves, exactly as the Sabbath day teaches us to rest and be joyful in Yah, exactly as the feast days teach us to live a life free of spiritual leaven, and to prepare for a final, global harvest of souls.

We must see ourselves in the mirror of the Gospel, and we must help one another to look at ourselves in that mirror, and this is why we “speak often one to another,” and talk of victory, faith, and love.

The Law exists, as the Scriptures tell us, for sinners. It was written out for (and by) Moses on tablets of stone, to reveal to us what righteousness is, what it looks like, to our Father. If it were not for the written record, man could claim any supposed revelation as “truth,” and be convicted that error was fact. As we saw, this will not lead to the true faith.

Similarly, although victory over sin cannot be learned like some mathematical process, it is nevertheless necessary for us to “see” it before us, so that we can know it IS, and be changed into that same image.

We teach victory, just as we teach the Law, to show what righteousness is. We teach victory to say, “Here is what Yah has for you. Here is the great gift that we receive when we accept the Son.” It is not, “Do this, then this, and then that... and you shall have victory.”

Rather it is, “This is what Yahshua looks like, when lived out through our flesh.” In defending our faith, in revealing our faith to others and ourselves, we are – consider this carefully – resurrecting the Son of Yah afresh. Now, of course there is no power in any of us to raise anyone to life; but if we receive Yahshua, He will live through us. Those who do not receive Him reject the opportunity to have Him live in us. Those who resist Yah and His people in this last generation “crucify” Him a second time. Those who accept Him, and unite with His people, doing just the opposite, cause Yahshua (by His own power and the Father’s) to live again on earth.

Now again, this is to be considered carefully. The Father and Son have, are, personify, Life un-borrowed. They do not require our worship, our acceptance, our service, to be, and to accomplish all that they will. Nevertheless, within us, we are either “dead” by living to self, or “alive” by living to Yah, and He comes into us as new life, He lives through us as new life, as life everlasting.

The defense of our faith, after it has been defined and developed, is the revelation of the resurrection of Yahshua in us.

We are defenders of the Faith of Yahshua. We are the Body through whom He lives – which is the very reason why we are called such a thing: the Body of Christ. We may defend His Faith through speaking, or through actions as the circumstances warrant, but in all things, whether we speak or not, whether we eat or drink, whether we work or rest, we are acting according to the truth as it is in Yahshua, and with the conviction that comes from a choice to love, serve, and obey the Father and Son. We step into that reality as the 144,000 of Yah.

When we make this choice, then we have victory: untrained, unpracticed, and yet nevertheless perfect, because it comes to us perfect from the hand of the Creator. This is the victory that overcomes the world, as it is written, even our faith. (1 John 5:4) And so we teach the victory, we teach the Gospel, not that others may learn how to “do” it, as if this were a religion of works, but that they may come to “know” it, to receive it in its pre-made perfection, and once it is defined for them, once it is developed into a new creature in their hearts, then they will be able to form proper convictions, and defend the truth therewith.

Then they will have the Faith of Yahshua, and inherit everlasting life.

Let us, then, be faithful servants of the Lord of this doctrine, and defend our faith by our testimony, by our inspired words and actions, and for the sake of love for those who need so desperately to see this victory revealed in their sight.

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